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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 000823

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ELA, AF/SPG

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [SU](#) [CD](#) [EG](#)

SUBJECT: S/E GRATION MEETS FORMER SUDANESE PM AL MAHDI

REF: CAIRO 550

Classified By: A/DCM William R. Stewart for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S) Key Points

-- U.S. Special Envoy (S/E) for Sudan, General J. Scott Gration told former Sudanese PM Imam Sadiq al-Mahdi on April 29 that he was working on an interim ceasefire in Darfur so that humanitarian efforts could be improved. Al Mahdi said the effort to obtain a ceasefire was admirable because of the need to protect civilians and provide humanitarian relief, but he felt a more radical approach was need to address longer term issues.

-- Al Mahdi said the Arab-centric policies of the Bashir regime politicized ethnicity and forced aggrieved groups to take up arms against the state, and the regime's response to the insurrection created a humanitarian catastrophe.

-- The Imam said he wanted to create a "national forum," which govern until elections in 2010, and focus its efforts on a resolution to the Darfur crisis, preservation of the CPA, and the democratization of Sudan.

-- Al Mahdi called for a "third way" solution to the ICC arrest warrant, which would create a hybrid court of Sudanese, Arab and African judges to review charges of crimes in Darfur and apply international law.

-- S/E Gration told Al Mahdi that he would factor Al Mahdi's ideas into the USG approach, as we move beyond a ceasefire and resolving the humanitarian situation in Darfur.

12. (C) S/E Gration, met with former Sudanese PM, Imam Sadiq Al Mahdi, at Al Mahdi's home in Cairo on April 29. Al Mahdi said he was supportive of U.S. efforts in Sudan because they were creating goodwill. However, he stated that things are so bad in Sudan, that a more radical approach is needed. Al Mahdi said that Sudan was pluralistic society where democracy will work and his said the current government had used force to apply a "restrictive ideology." He said that there is a need to create a system that will involve all the stakeholders and govern by "democratic consensus." He told Gration about his plan to create a "national forum" for Sudan that would govern until future elections (reftel). The forum would be made up of the key parties including the National Congress Party (NCP), the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), the Democratic Union Party (DUP), the Communist Party, SLA-Minni Minawi, the Eastern Front, Hassan Al Turabi's Popular Congress Party (PCP), and Al Mahdi's Umma Party. According to Al Mahdi the forum would work on a resolution to the Darfur crisis, preservation of the CPA, and the democratization of Sudan.

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The Darfur Crisis: Complicated by the ICC  
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13. (S) Al Mahdi told Gration that the Darfur problem was created by a minority regime in Khartoum that wanted to apply its own policies to change the social and political life in the region. He stated that trial conflict over resources has always occurred in Darfur and was traditionally resolved by local mechanisms. However he said that the Government of Sudan's (GOS) Arab-centric policies politicized ethnicity and forced those aggrieved groups to take up arms against the state. Al Mahdi said that the regime's response to the insurrection created a humanitarian situation where in the U.N. had to intervene and "internationalize" the conflict. He highlighted that prior to 2003 there was one U.N. resolution dealing with Sudan and more than 20 since 2003, all related to Darfur.

14. (C) The Imam told Gration that the current U.S. effort to obtain a ceasefire was admirable because there is an urgent need to protect civilians and provide humanitarian relief. However, he said that the ICC decision to issue an arrest warrant for President Bashir complicated the political situation. Al Mahdi stated that Darfuri leaders are no longer content with "justice", but want "regime change." He said the rebel leaders only want to become the "John Garang" of Darfur, but he opined that none have the status, and each sees a gain by any leader as a loss for the others. Al Mahdi said that if left unresolved, the conflict in Darfur will derail the CPA and he told Gration that a resolution to Darfur was not possible under the current government.

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The National Forum: A Way Forward

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15. (C) Al Mahdi explained to S/E Gration the national forum's solution for Darfur would restore the status quo ante 1989. This would include making Darfur one region so it could "regain its identity." He said that the Central Government would return all land holdings to tribal administration, and Darfur would be represented in the presidency. In terms of justice, the IDPs and refugees would be compensated for the houses and property and communities would be compensated for schools and hospitals. IDPs and refugees would be returned to their homes and those who the GOS brought in would be evicted. The share of power and wealth would be redistributed relative to the population, as with the CPA.

16. (C) Al Mahdi said that the CPA's assumption that the NCP represents all the North and the SPLM represents the entire South was faulty. He suggested a national constitution conference to apply CPA principles to other regions. Al Mahdi said that you cannot give the South power and wealth sharing rights and deny the others. S/E Gration was interested in Al Mahdi's ideas, but expressed doubts about the NCP willingness to participate and Minawi's ability to represent all of Darfur. He also articulated his concern that reopening the CPA could have terrible consequences for the future of North-South relations.

17. (C) The Imam said the NCP may not like the idea of sharing power and wealth, but he believes the NCP would participate because the forum offers a way to preserve the unity of Sudan, and would give the party a deal, which he called a "third way," on the ICC. The third way would create a hybrid court of Sudanese, Arab and African judges to review charges of crimes in Darfur and would apply international law. Al Mahdi said this idea is in line with the Rome Statute and would provide the NCP with a way out.

18. (C) Miriam al-Mahdi, Sadiq's daughter and member of the Umma Party said that the international community needs to coordinate its efforts into "one big effort" to resolve the problems in Sudan. Miriam told Gration that the national forum does not want to reopen the CPA, but get it "unstuck."

The Imam told S/E Gration that there is no quick fix to the problems in Sudan. He said what is needed is a comprehensive fix. Al Mahdi feels that if there is national and international consensus behind his plan then the problems in Sudan can be resolved. S/E Gration told Al Mahdi that he would factor Al Mahdi's ideas into the USG approach, as we move beyond a ceasefire and resolving the humanitarian situation in Darfur.

19. (U) S/E Gration's staff cleared this message.  
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